

Leadership Summit Conference

August 10-12, 2006

These are notes taken by Eric Holdeman while attending an annual Leadership Summit. The format for this conference is a satellite downlink from one central location near Chicago. This year there were 60,000 people attending from over 80 sites worldwide.

Life Cycle of a Leader: Leaders sometimes create controversy, and then you have to bear that burden. Products, like the eight track tape is an example of product cycles. The same with cassette tapes, etc. There are short cycle products like Edsel cars, and pet rocks. People also have their seasons.

What is the life cycle for leaders? Let's use the example of Bill Gates and where he is in his life cycle of leadership. Will his transition from the head of Microsoft to leading his foundation increase or decrease his influence. Also, look at Jimmie Carter as a leader and his years of leadership. It would appear that his influence has increased, after giving up the most powerful office in the world. Is his influence continuing to build?

The earlier you begin leading, the better leader you will probably end up being. But, what do you have to offer someone when you are in your 20s. In our youth we make plenty of mistakes. It is a good time for mistakes, since your influence and scope of responsibility is limited. But, in your youth you have heart, passion and energy—which is enough. Your early days may set the course for the rest of your life.

Leaders cannot exist on passion alone. There has to be a plan that is part of the leadership process. Followers need their leaders to have passion and a plan and skill. Your leadership cycle should not follow the same life cycle as that of the pet rock. You need to pay a developmental price to develop skills. Leaders need to paint pictures of the future. You have to have a growth strategy. What are your goals? Where do you get leadership skills? You read books on leadership! Then keep reading! This reading should take all forms. Business, military, and political leadership books. Go where leadership is taught. This takes commitment. Interact with leaders who are better than you. 90% of learning about leadership is via leading.

Leadership development becomes your next task. Leaders develop other leaders. You need to invest strategically in specific people who you identify as future leaders. Look for people with character, competence and chemistry. You give them real responsibility.

The next highest level of leadership development is when you have a “constellation of leaders” who surround you and with whom you share leadership. Here is some criteria for those people who you interact with, people you surround yourself with (big dog leaders):

- Intelligence is needed. Smart people! [My add: “Life is tough, but it is a lot tougher if you’re stupid.” John Wayne.]
- Energetic people, people who are energized enough to energize others
- Relational IQ. High achieving people don’t always have this. You need people who relate well with others.
- Win or die spirit. There needs to be a level of commitment that goes beyond the pay check. People who are not deterred by a prognosis of calamity or uncertainty. Quitters are not in this pool of people

If you don’t surround yourself with this level of leaders then you will be the restraining factor to leadership growth. Leaders need to share power and influence.

What is the difference between being power hungry and being impact hungry? You need to create places for people to have increased ability to have more impact.

For organizations what do you do with seasoned leaders who are past their prime, but still have something to contribute? We need to look for opportunities to tap these leaders and their abilities beyond what would be the normal life span for leaders. These are “statesmen-like” leaders who we need to lift up and use appropriately in whatever our endeavors.

Leaders can make a real difference over the course of their lifetime. Leadership matters and you can chose to make a difference as a leader.

Focused Leadership: This is needed because there is never enough time to do everything. So, you have to focus! You can have a tendency to cheat towards areas where you can measure progress. That means that you will probably cheat at home in order to achieve more at work. If you go home early, there is nothing to show for being “home.” But if you stay at work another two hours you can show something. [In the military this was the mission, men, me thinking.]

There is this fear of failing and that my success depends on me. If I don’t do X, then Y will happen.

If you cheat—you need to chose to cheat on work, not family. Work can take care of itself. We all have a unique roles to fill at home that no one else can fill. Others on the team can take care of the work issues. They will be there when you return the next day.

You have a “sweet spot” in your leadership. Play to your strengths, focus on it, not on your weaknesses. Sometimes it is true that the less you do, the more you accomplish. You are not good everything, so do what only can be done by you as the leader. You won’t be able to take advantage of every opportunity when you prioritize. This brings about focus for your mission and function. The fear of “If I don’t, it won’t” is something we need to combat. You need to establish a sustainable pace since we are in a marathon not a sprint.

You want healthy people in your organization. Unhealthy people don’t want to be in a healthy organization. Healthy people will either become unhealthy, or you will drive them away.

Tribal Warfare: In the non-profit world and other service oriented areas of our economy we can suffer from “terminal niceness.” Few people, if any are trained and educated on dealing with conflict.

Most conflict is not about personalities, but more tribal, different cultures and values clashing. Resource allocation will naturally produce conflict [we have seen this as the Homeland Security funding continues to decrease].

There are formal and informal tribes. Informal tribes are those which you won’t find on the organization chart. These can be functional and just opinion driven. Tribes use language differently within sub-cultures.

When dealing with conflict you need a preparation phase so you know how you are going to address the conflict. You need to come prepared to state the other person’s/tribe’s position more eloquently than they can.

There is a difference in how people think and relate/talk. Fast pace thinkers will be driven crazy by slow paced detailed thinkers.

Here are some skills to think about and implement:

1. An anatomy of a conversation. Think of it as a transaction. What is the real topic of the conversation? Within the conversation the tone and style are critical. For tone if you could add “you idiot” after your sentence the tone is probably not right. There are four outcomes to any conversation:
 - Building relationships
 - Maintaining relationships
 - Rebuild/repair relationships
 - Damage the relationshipThere is not “neutral” effect
2. Language should be a tool—not a weapon. Every tribe has a different dialect. You have to be multi-lingual between the dialects.

3. Candor can lead to rudeness, depending on the person, the situation and the dialect.
4. Everyone needs the discipline of listening. We have the skill, but not the discipline. We tone people out.
5. When dealing with angry people – just listen. Don't try to interject until their speech slows down.
6. Humor breaks down many barriers

The Risky Business of Hiring Stars: You are looking for apostles who will preach the good news of your service. Consistent service is best for retaining customers. Loyal staff is what leads to loyal customers who are satisfied. Staff will be loyal if they are satisfied. Staff are satisfied if there is a positive work environment. Bottom line is focus on hiring good staff and creating the right environment for them.

Research was done on stock analysts. Their job is to look at companies and give recommendations on buying and selling stocks. Stock analysts should be able to carry their job skill with them from job to job, company to company.

Non-stars tend to move more than stars. New stars move twice as often as long term stars. Then there are “shooting stars” because they only succeed for about a year. What happens to the star when they move? The star who moves has decreased performance for five years. The performance of their peers who work with them goes down. The stock market value of the company who hires a star goes down.

A star is a star because not only because of their skills, but also their platform (company, organization, etc.). The stars performance declines when they are brought in to improve the performance of an organization.

Transplanting a star is like doing a heart transplant. It is the care afterwards that makes the difference. Stars performance declines most when stars move to a lower level platform/organization. 90% of the value of the star comes after they are handled after their hiring. Stars have to be socialized into the organization. Post hiring integration is this most important step in hiring a star.

Hire a star with the team around them. Look at the constellation of the star. Look to hire the entire team. Hiring someone new to start something new has the best success.

Strategy #1: Build your own stars from within, do everything possible to hold on to them. Strategy #2 (Yankees) buy them from other teams. Strategy #3 Develop stars from within, but don't worry about hanging on to them.

Strategy #1 has the best potential and track record for success.

When really good people leave the organization they become ambassadors for the organization. Pay attention to how people leave the organization that they leave with good will from the organization.

When business thinking fails other organizations: A third of the readers of “Good to Great” come from the non-business sector—social sector. If you have a social sector organization, becoming more like a business is not the answer. Fact is that most businesses are not great. Don’t copy a failed system. Great societies need great institutions, not just great businesses.

A big difference between social and business sector is the money factor. In the social sector, money is only an input factor, not an output factor. What do we mean by great results? How do we measure our improvement? If it is not measurable does not mean that distinctive impact and lasting impacts are not important. For an orchestra, how many standing ovations are given? Who wants to come and be a guest conductor? Meaningful metrics are needed for social organizations. Qualitative and qualitative measurements are needed. The moment you begin to think you are great, you are not. The goal is to always be wanting to get better.

How do you get things done when you don’t have executive power? There is the power of language, shared vision, and it is a more defused power map. There is a legislative level of leadership. You have to assemble the pieces of an organization to make a condition for the right decision. It is the difference between an elected mayor/executive and someone who “leads” on a legislative council. This does not mean you are seeking consensus, you are orchestrating the decision.

The more important decisions are not on what, but who. You need the right people on the bus first, then decide where to drive the bus/company. In mission driven organizations your work is too important to trust it to the wrong people. You need to be rigorous in having the right people in the right seats. An ineffective person on your staff costs a lot!

You want people who can be productively neurotic. This leads to people who wake up everyday and understand their mission and go to work with enthusiasm. Stock options and other perks are not what drives performance. It is what comes from the inside of the person that makes a difference. Incentives is not what makes it happens in people. In Eric’s lingo, I’m looking for “true believers” in the mission of emergency management and preparing our communities. This truism is reflected in the fact that it is the teacher in the classroom who makes the difference in education, it is not the materials or the funding. Building something great is not a function of your circumstances. It is a function of your choices.

Leadership really only exists when there is no power to make people do what you need them to do.

Consistency is critical to your mission. What are you deeply passionate about?

The bonding glue that allow the organization to continue and flourish is brand capital. Your reputation is what will allow you to take an organization to another level. Building a great organization is the goal, not building great programs.

Life is not about what you achieve, but about what you contribute. What are your gifts and how are you intending to spending them.

Interview with Bono: One of the main points I got out of this session was to use what you have been given. Bono is using his celebrity to advance the cause of social justice in the world, especially Africa. These are issues of poverty, which leads to other issues of health and education. He is still a rock star at heart and it is music that is his passion, but he is making a difference by leveraging his name for doing good things for people.

Silos, Politics, and Turf Wars: Why do groups fail? Is because of conflict? Interpersonal conflict? How do we confront and not make it personal? It can also come from Silos. Divisions that convert colleagues into adversaries. The devil may be in the management.

Silos: The power of crisis can eliminate silos. A crisis provides a rallying cry for an organization. Why do we have to wait for a crisis in order to call us to work together. We need an ongoing thematic goal.

Thematic goal:

- Single Thing
- Qualitative
- Temporary (bound in time)
- Shared across the organization (especially the leadership team)
- e.g. "If we accomplish only one thing during the next ____ months, what would that be?"

Sometimes our first crack at establishing a thematic goal we are not strategic enough. People will typically establish a tactical goal.

What would we have to do in order to reach our goal? You need to define the objectives.

How do you keep this alive and keep it real? Answer:

- Put it in your weekly staff meetings
- We need to take functional hats off and think about the organization as a whole
- The best ideas will usually come from outside the functional area.

- Who owns this process? Someone is designated.

Dead Leader Running: We reproduce what we are. If we want to care for the future, we have to model appropriate behavior at work and at home. Character is what bleeds out of your toes, not what comes out of your mouth.

Everything you start--you become the owner of it. High capacity leaders have trouble with not innovating. Eventually, you will start to burn out.

Serotonin can be replaced by adrenalin for a time, but eventually you will burn out. Suffering will change you, but not always for the better. Rebuilding serotonin requires a trickle charge that takes time off away from work to make it work.

The road to success and the road to a nervous breakdown are many times the same road. Sometimes radical change happens via radical pain. At sometime in a high capacity person's life they will become undone.

Eventually you will hit the wall. Then you have to re-look what makes your life tick and what your values are.

You have to know what fills and drains your tank. You should document – write it down what these activities are that fills your tank! What puts the burdens on you and your emotional health? When you get too busy to fill the tank, then eventually you will commit emotional suicide because you will run out of gas. The busier you get the more you need to spend time filling your tank.

What am I doing? With whom am I doing it? Where am I doing these things that I feel the most alive. These are the questions to ask about filling your tank. You need to share your list with your spouse, or a best friend and be accountable to each other. Set aside time to fill your tank or you will eventually run out of gas.

Principle: Understand balance in life--Principle of the fulcrum. You are balancing work and family life--together. The problem is that your life and work is in constant movement. You need to change your fulcrum to match where the need is in your life.

Principle: Lead out of rest. We need parameters set. Schedule your rest points on your calendar first! Then fill in the rest with what you have to do.

For Eric—I need to get back into reading on a regular basis, not just while I'm on vacation. And, I need to get more sleep every night. For instance, I've gone forever on six hours of sleep at night. "Sleep in" by going to bed earlier since that is when your best and deepest sleep occurs.

Principle: Find a lightning rod. You need someone to talk to who knows their role. If you don't channel your "issues" you will electrocute those you love and work with. In most cases it cannot be your spouse since they will carry the burden for you. Share your victories with your spouse—not your problems.

The Power of Clarity: Success is based on leadership and leaders. Leaders have to give clear and certain instructions. When leaders' instructions are not clear, it will frustrate your followers. Think of Churchill's statement about defending England. It was not uncertain as to what England would do.

Martin Luther King was clear as to when the civil rights movement would push forward. His message was clear—it was now!

Followers want clarity for the future and the mission of your organization. People will challenge your vision, but it is your vision that will carry you and your mission forward.

Vision needs to be declared and declared again and again. Then people will know what train they are on.

Next year's Leadership Summit is August 9-11, 2007.